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CORRESPONDENCE

NOTES ON PRADON

I. According to his biographers no separate verses of Pradon are known other than his *Impromptu à Mlle Bernard* and his versified answers to Boileau's *Satires*. LaChèvre¹ cites only the *Réponse à la Satire X. du Sieur D****. The compilation called *Nouvelle Bibliothèque de Société*² contains two unknown epigrams of Pradon, probably taken from a manuscript collection of epigrams or copied from another compilation:—

CONTRE UN FILOU

Colin, à ce qu'on dit, trois Archers inhumains
T'ayant pris à l'écart, faisoient mal tes affaires;
Mais tu t'es finement dérobé de leurs mains:
C'est le moindre larcin qu'on t'ait jamais vu faire.

* * * * *

Faut-il être étonné qu'à la jeune Isabelle,
Malgré tout ton esprit, tu plaisais moins que moi?
Tu ne l'entretiens que de toi;
Et je ne l'entretiens que d'elle.

In the same volume³ an epigram is found which his biographers have not collected:

Certain Pradon, bâtard de Melpomène,
Rimant toujours et rimant toujours mal,
Voulut encor exposer sur la scène,
De son génie un avorton fatal.
L'affiche annonce, et tout Paris y vole:
Chacun, avant, eut soin de se munir
D'un gros sifflet, vain projet, soin frivole;
On bâilla tant qu'on ne put s'en servir.

M. B.
D. S.

These initials M. B. D. S. are those of Monsieur Boileau Despreaux. Other of his epigrams in the same collection are signed in the same way.

II. The mother of Pradon was Marguerite DeLastre of Rouen. She was probably the daughter of Charles DeLastre who acquired local fame as a poet and whose verses are cited by Guyot in the *Trois siècles palinodiques*. He was crowned at the annual competition of the "Palinods" in 1614, 1616, 1620, 1623, 1625, and 1627. The father of Pradon's mother must have died before 1635, since

¹ *Bibliographie des Recueils collectifs*, Paris, 1901-1905, III, 486.

² London, 1782, iv, 104.

³ P. 116.

she is mentioned in her marriage act ⁴ as the daughter and heiress of "le feu Charles DeLastre." The accordance of dates goes to show that the poet Charles DeLastre and Pradon's grandfather were the same person. This might explain the poetical strain in the competitor of Racine. The only published verse of DeLastre seems to be the poem printed in the anthology, *Le Cabinet des Muses* of 1619. Saint-Amant calls this poet his friend in *La Vigne* (1627):—

Cher compatriote de Lâtre,
Humeur que mon ame idolâtre,
Homme à tout faire, esprit charmant,
Pour qui j'avoue estre Normant.

III. "Le ridicule tue," and Boileau has very effectively killed Pradon's reputation. To measure the distance between our appreciation and the evaluation of his work during his lifetime it is instructive to note that as early as 1685, when he had not published his best play, *Regulus*, he was cited in Holland, together with Corneille and Racine, as the highest authority in French dramatic art, and as an example worthy of inspiring the Dutch playwrights. The Dutch poet Bernagie in the Preface of his *Paris en Helene* (1685) discusses poetic justice and defends Corneille's opinion that it can not be styled a fixed rule in tragedy. Virtue, he argues, is always lovable even in the midst of the most frightful and the most unmerited disasters. The virtuous hero must therefore not triumph at the end of the play. "Most of the tragedies of wise antiquity end in this way. *Britannicus*, *Bajaset*, *Piramus* and *Thisbe* etc. testify clearly as to the opinions of Racine, Pradon and others." *Piramus* and *Thisbe* here referred to is Pradon's play of 1674. The members of the influential Dutch literary society of the time, "*Nil Volentibus Arduum*," translated from the plays of Pradon to give their compatriots a taste of what they esteemed the best in the French dramatic art of the time.

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A NOTE ON *The Tempest*

It seems a thankless task to try to locate the island that Shakespeare had in mind in writing his *Tempest*; surely it is only a fairy island, a scene of enchantment not to be found on any map, and forever vanished from human view as completely as Plato's Atlantis. But in spite of this, more than one critic has been tempted to give to these scenes of magic a local habitation and a name. Hunter contended for Lampedusa, Elze for Pantalaria. Many have assumed that the Bermudas were the locality meant;

⁴ Beaurepaire, *Notice sur Pradon*, Rouen, 1899.